



**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P**  
**Today | This Week**

## Drug card aids pets, humans

**Jodie Snyder**

The Arizona Republic  
Jul. 19, 2006 12:00 AM

They may be man's best friends, but dogs also can be pricey.

Just ask anyone who routinely pays more at the vet's office than they do at the doctor's office.

A new program may help with some costs of prescription drugs for both. Maricopa County now is offering a discount program that covers pet, as well as human, medications.

The National Association of Counties card is similar to the state's Copper Card, and it offers an average discount of 20 percent on prescription drugs. The card, which is free, may be the first in the country being promoted for human as well as pet medications. All county residents, regardless of age, income, or existing health coverage, may use the card. However, it can't be used in conjunction with any other prescription-drug program.

It's accepted at more than 80 percent of the pharmacies in the Valley. The only pet medications that are covered are ones that are also used by humans - for example, human insulin used to treat diabetic cats. There are no restrictions or limits on frequency of use.

The discount-card program is administered across the country by Nashville-based Caremark Rx Inc., which has a large Arizona operation. In 2004, counties started offering the card to help people without health insurance.

### Side benefit

Shawn Nau, Maricopa County's director of health care mandates, said the county became interested because the Health Department gets lots of calls from people who need help paying for their prescription drugs. But those county officials looking at the NACo plan were struck by the pet-prescription portion.

"It was just a side notation in the paper and we said, 'Hey, wait a minute, what is this?' The more we looked into it, the more we realized it was an unexplored discount," said Nau, who said he had never heard of a discount card for pets before.

"The pet prescription was a big reason for this. I would be lying if I said otherwise."

Maricopa County began offering the card in April, and so far 500,000 cards have been distributed. County officials expect 3 percent to 5 percent of the cards will be used.

The county now is ready to promote the program more heavily.

Nau says the NACo card can be used at different drugstores and have different discounts than the Copper Card.

"It doesn't hurt to have both," said Nau, who likened it to having a grocery-sponsored discount card.

Doris Smith of Glendale may be a candidate to try the card. She learned about the high costs of pet medication when Jake, her King Charles spaniel, developed a heart condition. One veterinarian put the dog on a costly medication, then another vet prescribed Vasotec, which is also used on humans and was less expensive.

### **New market**

By promoting the discounts, Caremark is entering a \$36 billion pet-care market.

To test the pet market nationally, Caremark sampled 2.5 million claims that it processed during a six-month period; about 10,000 were for pet medications. Company officials believe those numbers will increase as more people become aware of the program.

Drugstores see the cards as a way to drum up business.

Those who couldn't otherwise afford to get their prescriptions filled now will come to drugstores and will make other purchases, said Kirby Bessant, Caremark's vice president of consumer programs.

**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P**  
**Today | This Week**